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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000611

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2012

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SUBJECT: GOI'S REACTION TO SENDING A COORDINATED U.S. AND EU MESSAGE TO ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

REF: A) STATE 23988 B) ROME 489

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.5 (B)(D)

1. (C) ON THE EVE OF THE EU FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN SPAIN, POL MC DELIVERED THE POINTS IN REF A TO LUCA FERRARI, THE MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. FERRARI FULLY AGREED WITH THE US MESSAGE AND STRESSED THAT
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THE MFA IS CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY MESSAGE ARAFAT NEEDS TO HEAR RIGHT NOW IS TO END THE VIOLENCE.

2. (C) HOWEVER, FERRARI PREDICTED THAT MOST EU PARTNERS WILL THINK DIFFERENTLY. HE BELIEVED THAT FRANCE, GERMANY, AND SPAIN, TOGETHER WITH SOLANA, HAVE FORMED A BLOC WHICH WOULD PUSH FOR THE FRENCH PROPOSAL OF ELECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. (NOTE: FERRARI COMPARED THIS BLOC TO A COUPLE HAVING MARITAL PROBLEMS THAT DECIDES TO HAVE A BABY TO SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS. END NOTE).

3. (C) THE ITALIAN MFA HAD MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT THE FRENCH PROPOSAL, SAID FERRARI. ON ONE HAND, IT COULD POSITIVELY CHANGE THE DYNAMICS OF THE PALESTINIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, FERRARI KNEW THAT IT WOULD NOT BE FEASIBLE TO ORGANIZE AND CARRY OUT ELECTIONS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES UNTIL THE SECURITY SITUATION HAD STABILIZED

4. (C) AT THE FEB 8 MEETING IN SPAIN, FERRARI PREDICTED THAT ONLY THE UK WAS LIKELY TO SPEAK UP AGAINST THE FRENCH PROPOSAL. OTHER EU STATES WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO DO SO SINCE THEY HAD NO COUNTER PROPOSALS. AS FOR ITALY, FERRARI COULD NOT PREDICT WHAT PM AND ACTING FM BERLUSCONI WOULD DO SINCE HE FACED THE SAME DILEMMA AS OTHER EU STATES OF WANTING THE EU TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP BUT NOT HAVING A CONCRETE SOLUTION TO OFFER. (NOTE: EMBASSY ALSO SHARED POINTS IN REF A WITH THE PM'S OFFICE BUT DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE TO DISCUSS THEM DIRECTLY. END NOTE).

5. (C) FERRARI FINALLY PREDICTED THAT THE FEB 8 MEETING
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WOULD NOT RESULT IN AN IMMEDIATE ENDORSEMENT OF THE FRENCH PLAN AS IT WAS NOT CUSTOMARY FOR SUCH "INFORMAL" MEETINGS TO RESULT IN THE ENDORSEMENT OF KEY POLICY PLANS.
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